Edouard Manet’s Influence on Modern Art

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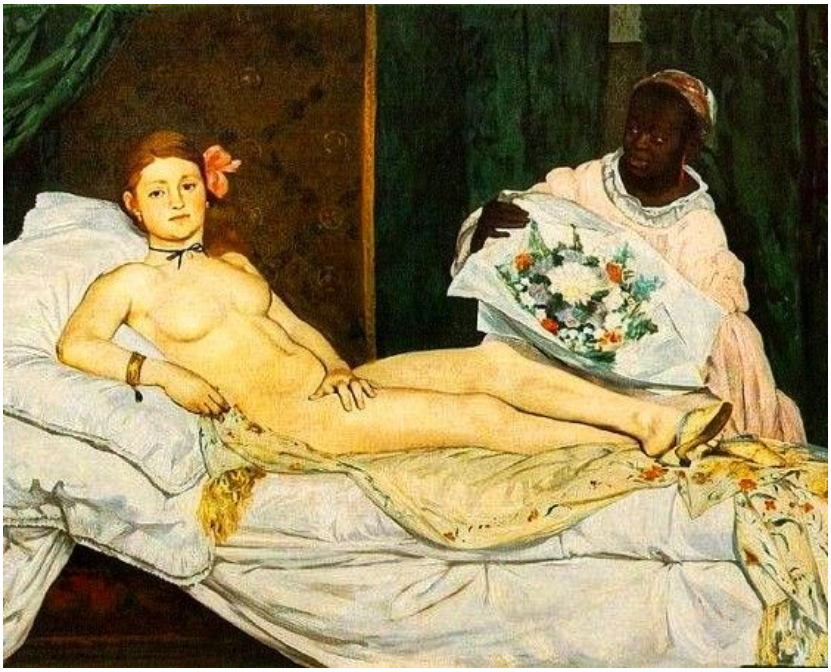
Edouard Manet was a major artist who followed poet Charles Baudelaire’s advice to paint modern life. Even though he came from a rich background, he lived a free and unconventional lifestyle, aiming to shock the French Salon with his modern, unconventional views of city life. While he is often connected with the Impressionists and influenced them, he also learned from Realism, Naturalism, and 17th-century Spanish painting. This combination of old and new styles gave him the basis for his innovative approach.

Olympia (1863)



Manet’s *Olympia* portrays a lower-class prostitute, presenting her confidently and provocatively. It challenges traditional depictions of women by showing her unashamed of her body and directly engaging with the viewer. The inclusion of a black cat, symbolizing sexuality and prostitution, adds to the painting’s provocative nature.

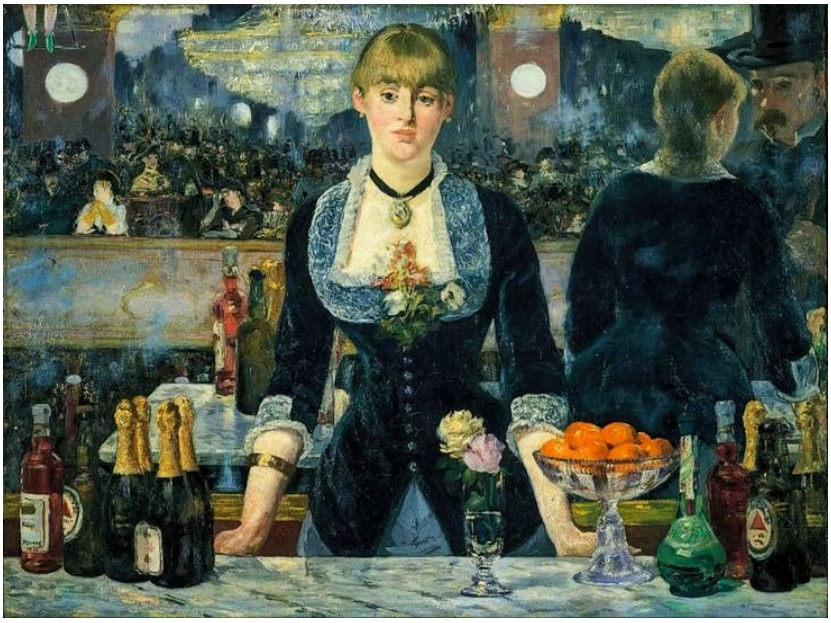
Oil on canvas – Musee d Orsay, Paris

Le Dejeuner sur l’Herbe (1863)

Manet's *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* depicts a nude woman casually sitting with two dressed men, which caused a scandal when it was shown at the Salon des Refuses in 1863. The painting blends influences from Giorgione and Raphael but deviates from traditional techniques with its unusual perspective and lighting. The woman's direct and provocative gaze challenges the viewer and questions societal and artistic norms.

Oil on canvas – Musee d Orsay, Paris

A Bar at the Folies-Bergère (1881-82)



In *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, Manet presents a melancholic café scene featuring a weary barmaid at a bustling venue. The lively atmosphere is reflected in the mirror behind her, but her sad, tired eyes avoid direct contact with the viewer, who also appears as a customer in the scene. The painting's unusual perspective in the mirror reflects Manet's exploration of artifice and reality. The marble countertop displays a still-life with beer and liquor bottles, flowers, and mandarins, foreshadowing Manet's final still lifes.

Oil on canvas – The Courtauld Gallery, London